Nenana, Alaska

First Presbyterian Church

JOHN E. YOUEL, PASTOR

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

July 10, 1940

Dr. Everett B. King,
156 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. King:

I recently spent two days at Nenana looking over the church building and the community in view of reaching some conclusions about our early repair of the building and resumption of services including Sunday School.

The inclosed kodak pictures will show you just about the way the building looks, with the exception of the fence which is mostly gone. Nothing has ever been done about the repair of the burned end - which was the manse, or residence for the minister and family. The walls of the auditorium have been covered with celotex since the fire. Also, roofing tar-paper, has been put on. Little else has ever been done. The Board provided the materials for that much, and local men donated the labor. - The floor is burned brown.

Building dimensions: Outside length- 70 ft.; width- 26½ ft. Auditorium- length is 37 ft. 3 in.; width, 24 ft. 10 in. Floor dimensions of the residence part- 24 ft. 10 in. square. On the first floor two rooms equal in size- 24 ft. 10 in, by 12 ft. and allowing for partition between them. Rooms were upstairs, and stairways up and down out of the kitchen room space. A full basement is there, and the foundation, wooden, seems to be intact. The furnace, hot-air, is in place, but needs considerable repairs and parts, including chimney. No competent person was available while I was there to make an estimate of the probable cost of the needed repairs for this building. I am sure that it would take as much as $1500 to put the building in good condition for use again. That is a lot of money to be invested in the little town, but there are as many as 150 permanent residents in Nenana, and there is no Sunday School maintained in the place for the 25 or more white children. These white children will not attend the Episcopal Mission, St. Marks- which is exclusively for the native children. We have done nothing along the line of services and S.S. for several years because Bishop Bentley and members of his mission staff had been conducting some services for the community in the town, other than at the Mission, for the white people, either in our building or in the School House. For the past year or so, they have done nothing about it. We can do nothing unless our building is again made usable. The School Board has taken action against the use of the School House for any Church or religious services of any kind. There are only a few families permanently in the community, but they should be provided with Church and S.S. privileges. I wonder what we can do about it?

Here are some ideas for our consideration: Should we, as the

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Presbytery, dissolve the Nenana- Grace Church, less than ten members, the two Elders are away from the town most of the time? Should we continue to do nothing about the whole matter for the present? Should we go there and set up services, including Sunday School, making use of the building in its poor condition, maybe setting up a large coal stove in the auditorium for heating purposes, which would not be adequate in the coldest weather? Should we, as has been suggested by some one in the community, turn over the building and property to the Town of Nenana to be used as a Community House for various purposes, entertainments, dances, shows, religious and educational meetings, etc., and that would involve our complete withdrawal from the field, discontinuing further ownership and responsibility for the property, therefore, no insurance obligation? Or, should we take a new grip on the field, put in enough money to restore the Church Building for good work and creditable appearance in the Community, and re-establish the Church with all of the usual departments of activity just as far as possible?

Of these several suggested plans, I would rather have us do according to the last mentioned. Hold the Property and put the Church Building in proper repair- again have our living and working Nenana- Grace Church. If the Board can provide the funds, I believe that we can arrange for Ministerial oversight, and local people to take part in the program enough to make it all more than worth while. Our Alaska Country is all NEW yet, and Nenana is strategically situated geographically, - "Where River and Railroad Meet." It is true- no mining projects have been developed anywhere near to Nenana, as is the case with most of the other going communities and towns. But, I think, as through the past years, that we should not withdraw from Nenana.

I hope that I have made a clear picture of the situation for you, Dr. King. I shall be glad to know your opinion and reaction ere long. I have known Nenana and the people there for about fifteen years, and always have been concerned for it all.

My plans for the next few weeks include: Making arrangements for the trip to St. Lawrence Island next month, two or three visits to mining camps via the main Highways out from here. Working over my materials and pictures in view of the contemplated visitations and contacts and talks in the States this coming fall, in keeping with your mentioned plan for me.

All is looking and going well here at Fairbanks. The Armstrongs seem to be fitting into the situation nicely. We are both well and rather enjoying the change of duty after so long on the job with the one Church. Our kindest regards and esteem.

Yours cordially,

John E. Youel

STUART C. WILLIAMS
MANAGER

Mayflower Hotel

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Ans –

Before any final decision can be honestly made about the work in Menana more time should be spent on the field – Therefore, I am asking you to spend 10 days or two weeks there holding services – after that time you will be in a position to render a more definite report –

You will have time to do this work because miss Banaan can not leave

Seattle until Sept 8/10th—

Thanks for the good reports about the armstrongs—

Cordially,

July 26, 1940

AIRMAIL

Rev. Mr. John E. Youel
Fairbanks, Alaska

Dear Mr. Youel:

Before any final decision can honestly be made about the work in Nenana more time should be spent on the field. I am therefore asking you to spend ten days or two weeks there holding services. After that time you will be in a position to render a more definite report. You will have time to do this work because Miss Bannan can not leave Seattle until September 10.

Thanks for the good report about the Armstrongs.

Cordially yours,

EBK:DH

SEP 1 9 1957

Final Report - Aug. 19,1957-- L. Burney Shell
Woodland Park Presbyterian Church

J

Since we are leaving tomorrow for Juneau, and then unto to Sitka Conference Wednesday, I am making my final report today.

The month of Aug. open with a trip to St. Lawrance Island, and to see Art and Marlyn French in their work in Gamble. "8 people, nine of them fromWoodland Park Church, chartered a pane for the trip. We left Anchorage Friday morning,with sleeping bags, food and "beverage". I found we needed more of the later. We had wonderful flight over, stopped at MaGrath and at Nome. We were met at Gamble by the Frenchss, and a wonderful group from the Church and the Base. I have never seen anything like the wonderful Christian Spirit, as well as warm welcome they gave us The brought the "Cat" and a sled to take our baggage to the Village. We returned the next Day, Saturday, Aug. 3rd. We did the impossible, we flew into tomorrow- Sunday, and flew back into yesterday, Saturday. That was an experience to tell the Grandchildren. We spent about two hours at Nome, than on not stop back to Anchorage, arriving about 6:30 p m--tired but happy, inspired and feeling we had experienced a new Revelation of the Powwr of God in the lives of a people, the rest of us need more of. The high light of the entire trip was a service at the Church, Friday night--You can't explain that, you had to feel it.

I have held the usual morning service on Aug. 4,11 and 18. Upon invitati on I attended the Ladies meeting and had dinner with them. I spoke at the men's meeting Aug. 5th on "Our Experiences to Gamble". I am due to speak again today, Aug. 19th, to the men. The men at the meeting Aug. arranged to paint the interior of the Chapel. They had already put new roof on it.

I have made a total of 18 calls since Aug. 1st--Had one very difficult marital problem, spend two hours Sunday night Aug.4th and then meet with the man Monday down town in his attorney's office, and to Court with them at 9 a m--It was unfortunate case, one Mr. Weeks had worked with a great deal before, the court threw the book at him this time, It was too late to help much.

I have secured the letters of two people for membership--They are already working in the Church, the woman singing in the choir. Mr. Weeks will find a letter in the hands of the Clerk of Session. He will have a full report left of the calls on outside people, those I found, but mostly those Olive Fisher gave me. I have made many calls on them.

Last night, Aug. 18th, we had a meeting of all those who went to St. Lawrence Island, Gamble, and they brought their pictures, Color slides, movies,etc, then a words from each as to their impressions. It was almost like re-experiences the trip to those of us who went. We invited the church and had about 35 or 40 present. It was a very helpful, inspiring meeting. I have about 100 color slides of this trip, including Frank Walkup alsleep on the plane, as well as one of the entire group on the plane, mostly asleep. I understand Olive Fisher has one of me very much in the same "condition of Frank Walkup" but I have not seem it.

I sent in my car expense first of the months, I have had a few dollars since but that is on us--we want it that way.

We will be talking about Alaska, and showing pictures in the States, for some time to come. Mrs. Shell is most thrilled over it all. I have already seven or eight calls for a program on Alaska within the Synod of Oklahoma--When I compare the needs, opportunities, and challenging opportunities for our church in Alaska with what the Synods, Oklahoma Synod not excluded by any means, get I hang my head in shame*What these boys are doing up here to cover so much with so little.

I visited Wasilla work program and the YP. Conference--It is wonderful what the men of the Presbytery did and well as the Group under Mr. Boys from the states,

We made a trip to Fairbanks and saw something of our work there, including the University Church, and the University.

We have been here three months, have been out of town seven nights during that time. The people have been wonderful to us to show us Alaska in and near Woodland Park and vicinity. We have been invited or taken out for meals 13 Sundays-all we have been here-A number of others for Breakfast or a meal during the week. We have never seen anything like it our our long Ministry. We have found a church which has a very much beloved Pastor, this makes us glad, then we found a church abole to make a place for us while we are here. We have done all we could to help build for the long pull in the church, under the leadership of the Pastor and his program. We had a Session meeting, as requested by the Pastor and outlined a committee wo think through a winder set up, then we called a meeting by approval of Session, all of the Elders Deacons, Trustees and Church school workers, officers and teachers and they have a tentative outline for the winter work. The First Church, program with the help of Frank Walkup, and the Leadership training conference, they have a good outline I think. I only work to help carry through what the Session had been requested and wanted done.

The waather has been wonderful, they say the best in years--In fact a bit too good for summer attendance. Our feeling is that we would have had some better attendance if we had had the 11 o'clock service rather than 9, since we were only having theone. We have had people come almost if not every Sunday for service at 11--one Sunday we had 10 or 12. Aug. 11th , we had four. This is for furture consideration for the next summer--if only one service, 11 a m would be the better in my opinion.

Yesterday they had a picnic at 12:30 for us--We all but got wet-but had a good time--The Church gave us a"love Gift" which was enough to to pay very thin dime of our "eats for the summer, with what they placed in the house when we came, some of which is still there,

I want to close by thanking my friend Earl Jackmon, the local Church and Pastor for giving us such a wonderful experience, I never dream we would have some much work, but it has been a joy, every minute of it. We will never be the same after this--we still have more to come, Juneau for a day and then Sitka for five days then home.

L. Burney Shell